



ChildrenSong of New Jersey, Inc.

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www.childrensong.org

Parent Handbook

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

CHILDRENSONG ARTISTIC STAFF

Title	Name	E-mail Address ¹
Artistic Director	Polly Murray	pmurray@childrensong.org
Choir Accompanist	Nick Watts	nick@childrensong.org

CHOIR NAMES AND LEVELS

PRELUDE CHOIR (PC)

The Prelude Choir meets weekly from 5:30-6:30pm under the primary direction of the Artistic Director. This group is for children ranging in age from 7 1/2 to 11 who need practice in pitch matching, tone production, and reading music. This ensemble performs at the annual December and May concerts as well as some additional venues, such as the Garden State Discovery Museum, and assisted living facilities. Members of this choir also participate in our annual Songfest. This group is considered our “beginning choir” and practices with the Allegro Choir.

ALLEGRO CHOIR (AC)

Allegro Choir meets weekly from 5:30-6:30pm, under the direction of the Artistic Director. The age range is 9 1/2 to 12 years old. These choristers are refining their basic competency in pitch intermediate-level ensemble. The repertoire is generally on the “light” side, but challenging. This group performs at the annual December and May concerts, seasonal outdoor festivals, assisted living facilities and the Garden State Discovery Museum. Allegro Choir combines with Prelude for most of the weekly rehearsals and Concert Choir for a portion of the rehearsals and seasonal performances. They also participate in the annual Songfest.

CONCERT CHOIR (CC)

The Concert Choir meets weekly 6:30-8:30pm, under the direction of the Artistic Director. The children range in age from 11 1/2 to 18 years. These choristers are able to sing accurately and in-tune, utilizing an excellent tone and vocal technique. Concert Choir is ChildrenSong’s advanced ensemble. They perform challenging repertoire in various foreign languages, utilizing multi-part harmonies, with some music performed *a cappella*. This group has the most challenging performance schedule: they perform at the annual December and May concerts, seasonal outdoor festivals, assisted living facilities, special engagements, and they are the only choir that participates in the annual tour. This choir requires the greatest commitment of all the ChildrenSong choirs.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

COMMITMENT TO CHILDRENSONG

ChildrenSong of New Jersey is a choral music education and performance program that teaches your child how to attain the highest level of artistic excellence in choral music performance. In order for all singers to reach this level of excellence, everyone must work together. Therefore, we require a strong commitment to ChildrenSong. A limited number of children are placed in each of the three choirs according to ability level and commitment to the group. ChildrenSong performances are a group effort. If a chorister misses a major ChildrenSong concert due to another activity's commitment, that child is letting the entire group down. ChildrenSong is not merely a large group of kids singing together, but an ensemble of talented young singers creating the art of song. If your child makes a commitment to ChildrenSong, he/she is expected to fulfill his/her commitment to the weekly rehearsals and the concerts for at least one semester.

REHEARSAL AND CONCERT ATTENDANCE

All choristers are required to attend ChildrenSong's regular rehearsals. Rehearsals are scheduled for every Monday night (except for major holidays) and one Saturday per month. Rehearsal times occasionally run over especially prior to a major concert. If it is necessary for your chorister to leave rehearsal at any time please advise the director prior to the start of rehearsal and she will dismiss your child from rehearsal. Other rehearsals may be scheduled as needed. Choristers are permitted to miss three rehearsals per semester. In case of inclement weather an email announcement and text message will be issued if it is necessary to cancel a rehearsal. A make-up rehearsal will be scheduled for any canceled rehearsals due to inclement weather.

Final rehearsals, Winter and Spring Concerts, Workshops, Recording Sessions and some other important concerts on the calendar are MANDATORY, as marked. That means everyone MUST participate. Please check these dates and clear your calendar for them. Winter and Spring major concerts will NOT be excused for any other reason except for extreme illness the day of the concert. Please consult the director if you anticipate a conflict with a concert. If your child has a conflict with the Winter or Spring Concert that cannot be resolved, he/she will be dismissed from the Chorus and will need to re-audition to return for the following semester. The major concerts are the culmination of an entire semester of work; if a child cannot participate in a major concert, there is no reason for the child to participate in ChildrenSong.

NOTIFICATION FOR ABSENCE

It is your responsibility to notify the ChildrenSong staff should your chorister miss a rehearsal or performance. If you are unable to notify ChildrenSong beforehand, please contact the staff as soon as possible after the absence. Please email (attendance@childrensong.org) to report an absence. This email is linked to the director.

A maximum of 3 absences are permitted per semester, after these absences have been exhausted the ability to progress within the choir will be determined by the ChildrenSong of NJ staff. Exceeding the absence limit may affect a singer's ability to participate in a small ensemble or solo part.

Excused absences: Prolonged illness (absence from two or more rehearsals for one illness requires a note from your physician), major family events, required school performance, school musical, major school testing (PSAT, SAT).

A Rehearsal Conflict Sheet will be distributed to each singer and must be submitted each semester for any prescheduled school performance/musical and family events. This will assist the staff with creating rehearsal plans for the semester.

GENERAL NOTES ON ATTENDANCE

Participation in the concerts, whether formal or informal, is the most important part of being in ChildrenSong. The commitment should be taken seriously. We understand that conflicts occur and children get sick, which is of course excused, but notification must still be made prior to all concerts. Your child is in ChildrenSong because he/she loves to sing and perform. We need the whole team to put on a good show. If you have questions or concerns about the commitment, please email the Artistic Director at (attendance@childrensong.org).

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

- ChildrenSong is a semi-professional chorus that requires excellent behavior from its members. Choristers are expected to behave appropriately at all times during choral rehearsals and functions.
- **Cell phone usage is prohibited during rehearsals and must be turned off**, violation of the policy warrants confiscation of the cell phone by the staff until the conclusion of rehearsal.
- Excessive talking, tardiness, and inattentiveness will result in one verbal warning. If the behavior continues, the parents will be contacted to discuss the behavior. If the behavior persists, the chorister will be dismissed from ChildrenSong.
- Other inappropriate behavior will be dealt with immediately. The parents will be contacted and the chorister may be dismissed from ChildrenSong at the sole discretion of the Artistic Director. There will be absolutely no refunds if a child is dismissed from the chorus.

PARKING AND PICKUP AT LUTHERAN CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOR

Pickup is expected, and appreciated, to be prompt. For safety reasons, it is best to park your car and come in to pick up your child, especially for the Prelude and Allegro Choir singers. If this presents difficulties in some way, please let us know and someone can be assigned to walk your child out to you. No child will be dismissed without a parent/adult chaperone present, unless the ChildrenSong staff has been notified otherwise. Parents and choristers may enter through the side door. **Please follow basic safety rules of the road.**

FACILITIES AT LUTHERAN CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOR

Under our agreement with this establishment, ChildrenSong is permitted to use only certain limited areas and only at specified times. We must leave our areas as we found them, with chairs put away, trash picked up and floor swept if needed. Bathrooms must remain in good condition. If you see a problem in the bathroom, please notify a staff member as soon as possible, so it can be taken care of. All chairs/tables used in the hallway must be put back in the music room after use.

REHEARSAL CHAPERONE DUTIES

At the beginning of each semester, parents may be called upon to serve as chaperones for rehearsals on an as needed basis. The following duties are the responsibility of the chaperone on duty:

- Assist the director/staff in passing out music, finding missing folios, obtaining a folio for a child that is new, and taking note of the folio number for our records.
- Stand near choristers who are inattentive or who may be talking during rehearsal. If they don't stop, tap them on the shoulder. The director should be notified immediately after rehearsal if inappropriate behavior persists.
- Help clean up excess papers and straighten up after rehearsal.
- Remain at rehearsal until all the children in the choir for which you are responsible have been picked up.
- Saturday rehearsal and Summer Camp chaperones: supervise children if they go outside for short breaks. Check to make sure all is cleaned up.

PROMOTION TO ALLEGRO AND CONCERT CHOIRS

Choristers in Prelude and Allegro Choirs will be permitted to audition for Allegro and Concert Choirs at the conclusion of each semester provided their attendance and behavior at rehearsals and concerts has been satisfactory and they meet the minimum age requirement to advance. The minimum age to advance to Allegro Choir is age 9 1/2 or during 4th grade and the minimum age to advance to Concert Choir is age 11 1/2 or during 6th grade. Auditions are held soon after both major concerts (December and May) or during the final few rehearsals of each semester. The Director will pull children out in small groups and assess/recommend singers for advancement.

When an advancement is suggested, the Artistic Director will evaluate both the chorister's commitment to ChildrenSong and their skill level. Due to the limited number of positions in each choir, not all children who audition will advance. Those who do not advance will be advised of the needed areas of improvement. The directors' assessment is final.

ATTENDANCE AND BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT

Choristers will be considered for advancement based on their commitment to ChildrenSong. They will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Attendance at rehearsals and concerts
- Effort to make up music from missed rehearsals
- Behavior and attitude in rehearsals and concerts
- Readiness to advance

SKILL LEVEL ASSESSMENT

Choristers will also be considered for advancement based on their ability to meet the skill requirements for the next level. Children will be asked to sing exercises found on the website page *How to Audition*. They will also be tested on their ability to match pitch and sing melodic patterns.

AGE AND VOICE REQUIREMENT

Choristers entering any of the choirs will be allowed to stay with ChildrenSong, as long as the director is in agreement, until age 18 in the Concert Choir, or until his/her voice changes or becomes too mature for the ensemble. Boys can advance to Concert Choir as early as age 11, if fully prepared.

ANNUAL CHOIR CAMP

ChildrenSong utilizes one week at the end of the summer for pre-season instruction due to the shortness of the season before the Winter Concert. We aim for 20 rehearsals per semester to successfully prepare for a show. Without camp, it would be 15 and not nearly enough preparation. In addition, this extra time is used to enhance musicianship skills and team building. This week of rehearsals gives everyone a head start for the year, so the children do not feel overwhelmed when they start school. The choristers are given a chance to learn their music, establish a group tone, and even take time each day to socialize and meet new friends.

Choir Camp is held the third full week of August. The times for camp are determined and communicated in early June. There may be group activities scheduled during the week, with details to be distributed with registration information. Although attendance at Camp is mandatory, we know that conflicts arise that cannot be resolved. Therefore, days missed at camp count towards Fall semester absences and only 1 other absence is permitted during the semester to remain in good standing. Absence from Choir Camp must be reported to the Artistic Director prior to August.

MAINTAINING MEMBERSHIP

Membership in ChildrenSong is both a privilege and an honor. Choristers represent the Chorus in rehearsals, performances, and on trips, and must exhibit exemplary behavior at all times. Poor behavior reflects on the entire group and will not be tolerated.

If poor behavior is observed, a parent conference by phone or in-person will follow as soon as possible after the occurrence. The chorister will be warned and, if the occurrence of poor behavior is repeated, the child will be dismissed from the chorus at the sole discretion of the Artistic Director.

In addition, parents must take responsibility for ensuring all tuition and fee payments are received in a timely fashion. Failure to settle any balances when required may result in your child's suspension from the Chorus.

CONCERT ATTIRE

To ensure the Chorus' appearance is uniform, specific attire is required for each choir in ChildrenSong. As each child progresses from Prelude to Concert Choir, the attire becomes more formal. ChildrenSong will provide certain items, as indicated below, while other attire may be purchased on your own.

Fittings will take place during rehearsals at the beginning of each semester. Attire fees are payable to “ChildrenSong of New Jersey, Inc.” and are due within the first two weeks of joining the chorus. No attire will be issued without payment in full.

There is also the opportunity to purchase used attire, depending on availability. If you are interested in this, please contact attire for more information.

Choristers are expected to be well-groomed at concerts. Clothes are to be ironed and buttoned. Shirts must be tucked in. Natural-colored hair bands and make-up are acceptable. Face and hair sparkles and large or shiny earrings are not acceptable. Low-heeled shoes are highly recommended.

The required attire for each choir and performance type is listed below. **Items that must be purchased from ChildrenSong are marked with an asterisk (*).**

Choir / Performance	Girls	Boys
Concert Choir (Major Concerts and Tours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildrenSong Formal Black Dress with Black Sash* • Black ballet type flats(no embellishments) with black stockings or knee-hi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildrenSong vest and black bow tie * • Tuxedo shirt * • Flat black trouser pants with black belt • Black shoes and black socks
Allegro Choir (Major Concerts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildrenSong Formal Black Dress with Blue Sash * • Black ballet type flats(no embellishments) with black stockings or knee-hi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildrenSong blue bow tie * • Tuxedo shirt * • Flat black trouser pants with black belt • Black shoes and black socks
Prelude Choir (Major Concerts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildrenSong Blue Polo Shirt* • Plain Black pants with belt if necessary • Black shoes and black stockings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildrenSong Blue Polo Shirt* • Flat black trouser pants with black belt • Black shoes and black socks
All Choirs (Informal Performances and Events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildrenSong Blue polo shirt * • Nice blue jeans (no tears) • Shirt must be tucked in • Sneakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChildrenSong Blue polo shirt * • Nice blue jeans (no tears) • Shirt must be tucked in • Sneakers

A note about informal performances: Most informal venues are jeans (fall/spring) or jean/khaki shorts (late spring/summer). Check the announcements carefully for specific informal attire. We will do our best to give advance notice for specific concert attire requirements. Formal attire will ALWAYS be the same.

PERFORMANCES

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

A schedule of events is included with our registration packet and is available on our website, www.childrensong.org. This calendar has the events for the entire season and is updated as needed. Choristers will be informed of revised schedules and they will be available at rehearsals.

CONCERT CHOIR TOUR

Every year the Concert Choir travels to participate in a choral festival with other singers from around the country, or a musical tour of new places. The approximate cost of the trip will be announced during the Fall semester. Choristers can reduce the cost by extensive fundraising during the season. The tour fee is generally broken down into several small payments. Please look for more information to come about the **Summer Tour**. Tours are optional, though there is always a minimum number of choristers that are needed to participate in order for the trip to take place. *Why go on tour?* Touring gives the kids an opportunity to exhibit life skills by living with others who are not necessarily family members for a short period of time as well as an opportunity get to know other singers within our own chorus and make friends in other choruses participating in the same festival. Tours also give the opportunity to work with a famous clinician and to learn more challenging music and to study his/her voice intensely. Allegro Choir singers who enter Concert Choir in January will also be given the opportunity to tour with Concert Choir.

STAFF MEMBERS AND PARENTS (A LIMITED NUMBER DETERMINED BY THE FESTIVAL OUTLINES AND DIRECTOR) CHAPERONE THE TOUR

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

TUITION AND FEES

TUITION

Your child's tuition includes a one-year membership in ChildrenSong, vocal music instruction, a ChildrenSong (Blue) polo shirt (for new members), and use of sheet music and a notebook.

MUSIC AND NOTEBOOKS

Notebooks must be kept in perfect condition throughout the course of the year. **No writing in the notebooks or covers.** The only writing in the sheet music itself should be musical markings. **Artistic drawings or text must not be written in sheet music or on notebooks.** Only **pencil** markings are permitted in the music (no pen or highlighters except on photocopied music). You may be asked to pay for a new binder if a new one is needed halfway through the year. You may be assessed a \$25 replacement fee for lost or unreturned music at the end of the semester for Concert Choir and a \$5 replacement fee Prelude and Allegro Choir.

CONCERT ATTIRE FEES

Specific concert attire is required for all ChildrenSong choristers, depending on the choir your child participates in. Please see the **Concert Attire** section for the required apparel. Concert attire fees are listed on the registration form and must be remitted with the chorister's tuition to ensure that the attire will be available early in the semester. Slightly used attire may be purchased based on availability, please see the Treasurer or Attire Chairperson for information.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Payments are due according to the following schedule:

- August 15th:** Full tuition is due + attire fees
- August 15th:** 1st Extended Payment Plan (EPP) payment + concert attire fees
- Sept. 15th:** 2nd EPP payment
- October 15th:** Final EPP payment

Regular tuition payments may be made online (starting August 1st) www.childrensongofnj.bigcartel, or by check (payable to ChildrenSong of New Jersey) or cash. EPP payments must be made by check or cash.

Should you require an extended payment schedule, please contact Patti Fuhrmeister at Fuhrmeister@childrensong.org to discuss arrangements.

TUITION DISCOUNTS

Multiple Siblings: This discount is available if you have more than one child enrolled in any of the ChildrenSong choirs at the same time. You will receive a discount off your total bill of \$25 per child for the second child and each subsequent child.

Choir Referral Credit: This \$25 Tour Credit is available when you refer an individual to ChildrenSong and they become a fully paid member.

SCHOLARSHIPS/EXTENDED PAYMENT PLAN

ChildrenSong is committed to ensuring that choristers with financial need receive aid so that they may sing with us. Full or partial scholarships are awarded solely based on need. Scholarship recipients must attend all concerts and adhere to the attendance policy to remain in good standing. **If a singer does not attend a mandatory function or does not complete the make-ups, the singer will not be eligible for scholarship the following season.** Families who receive financial aid will be expected to assist at a meaningful level with various ChildrenSong activities such as rehearsals, concerts and other events or fundraising activities.

Additionally, an extended payment plan is available for families who do not qualify for financial aid or choose not to apply for a scholarship, but need assistance in meeting the Chorus costs.

Initial payment is due the first day of Choir Camp with subsequent payments on the 15th of September and October. All balances due no later than November 1st.

If you wish to receive aid or apply for extended payments, please complete the Application for Scholarship and Extended Payment Plan form available on our website. If you need assistance with this process please contact *Patti Fuhrmeister, fuhrmeister@childrensong.org*.

BOUNCED CHECKS

ChildrenSong accepts checks as payment for tuition and other fees. However, if a check bounces, the family is responsible for the original amount of the check as well as any additional fees imposed by TDBank. All bank fees incurred by ChildrenSong for returned checks are the responsibility of the issuer. Notification of fee will be given and must be paid prior to redeposit of returned item or issue of new check/cash payment. Upon second occurrence of returned item(s) all payments must be paid in CASH.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is an important part of ChildrenSong membership. Tuition payments account for only 50% of the group's working budget! Most of the money for the chorus comes from fundraising projects and from grants. Successful fundraising allows us to offer our choristers the following:

- Exciting programs such as our SongFest held each spring.
- More new and challenging music to sing.
- Scholarships to those in need and payment programs to ease family financial burdens.
- Lower tuition costs. Compared to private music training or local arts and dance programs, ChildrenSong is still a bargain.

All choristers are required to support the chorus by participating in fundraising activities or by choosing the Fundraising Buyout option. This option relieves you of your obligation to participate in the Fall and Spring fundraising campaigns, no tour credits are earned with this option. All of our families are expected to participate in the choir's fundraising efforts through selling/purchasing items which result in \$100 of proceeds through the year or by selecting the \$100 buyout. This level of expectation is per family not individual singer.

Various fundraising projects are planned throughout the year typically including:

- Fall food and gift fundraiser;
- Sponsorships (ads) for the Winter and Spring concert program books;
- Spring Fundraiser Night (our major fundraising event for the year);

In addition, Concert Choir members can receive tour credit by participating in the fundraising projects. The credit is applied directly against their tour costs for choristers who would like to travel with ChildrenSong in the summer. In other words, choristers who have not yet moved up to Concert Choir this year or Concert Choir choristers who cannot participate in the current summer tour can expect to have the tour credits they earn during the current season "banked" for future use on the next available tour. **The Spring Fundraiser Night scheduled in February of each choir season is the optimal chance for choristers to earn tour credits through soliciting Silent and Basket Auction items.**

VOLUNTEERING

ChildrenSong needs your help to continue to give our choristers a high quality experience and to keep tuition low. **Your support is important to the organization.** ChildrenSong requires that each family volunteers at least three times a semester. Generally, we will ask families to volunteer once during the semester for chaperone duties and two times for another activity of their choice. You can volunteer by signing up when events are posted through the Sign Up Genius link sent through weekly email announcements when events are posted or by contacting our manager. Areas needing volunteers: coordinating a fundraising event, ticket sales at concerts, ushering, join a planning committee for fundraising dinner, rehearsal chaperone, concert chaperone.

TUITION REFUNDS

If your child leaves the chorus, refunds are available according to the following schedule, as long as all materials are returned.

Request Date	Amount
Up to 4 weeks from Registration	\$150 (Concert Choir) and \$75 (Prelude & Allegro) of the tuition payment will be retained (the cost of camp + 4 rehearsals) or prorated at the treasurer's discretion.
After 4 weeks from Registration	Absolutely no refunds will be given, except for mid-year voice changes for boy singers.

In order to receive a refund, the sheet music, folio, and vest (for CC only) must all be returned in complete and satisfactory condition. In addition, written notice by letter or email to ChildrenSong that your child wishes to discontinue membership in ChildrenSong must be provided **before** the due dates above. Upon receiving such notice, a staff member will contact you and arrange for the return of the music materials and a refund of any applicable tuition.

COMMUNICATION

E-MAIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

If you provide ChildrenSong with your email address, you will be subscribed to the ChildrenSong mailing list. By joining the list, you are eligible to receive weekly announcements, communicate directly with your child's director, and receive last-minute reminders about events, "spur of the moment" requests for help, and special performance opportunities.

The list is solely for use by ChildrenSong and your address is kept private from outside sources as well as other list members. The list is moderated to ensure that inappropriate content is not distributed.

Make sure to send an email to pmurray@childrensong.org to be added to the list or for any address changes.

Ms. Murray uses Remind to communicate with the choristers and for them to communicate with each other. This will also be used for rehearsal/performance reminders for parents too. Please complete the Remind form with registration packet.

Find us on Facebook, too!

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, check your email messages or call the chorus voicemail number (856-471-7664) after 4:00pm to determine the status of that evening’s rehearsal or performance.

VOICEMAIL/EMAIL

To reach a staff member by phone, please call 856 471-7664 and leave a message. Email is the QUICKEST way to reach Ms. Murray or any staff member. See email addresses below.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PARENT MEETINGS

Weekly announcements will be distributed via email each Sunday during the semester. **This is our main information link to you.** Please be sure to check your email regularly for updates. These announcements are important for rehearsal changes, performance opportunities, and reminders of upcoming events.

Parent meetings are held as needed to discuss important Chorus developments, schedule and event updates, fundraising plans, etc. Please check the calendar for scheduled parent meetings.

EMAIL CONTACTS

Department	Email Address
Attendance	attendance@childrensong.org
Auditions	auditions@childrensong.org
General Information Requests	info@childrensong.org
Polly Murray, Artistic Director	pmurray@childrensong.org
Patti Fuhrmeister, Treasurer	fuhrmeister@childrensong.org

MAILING ADDRESS

Please send any correspondence or payments to:

ChildrenSong of New Jersey, Inc.
PO Box 134
Haddonfield, NJ 08033

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ChildrenSong is managed by an appointed board of trustees. The trustees meet monthly to discuss business affairs of the Chorus, including review of Chorus finances, tour and concert planning, and concerns raised by parents.

Current Members are:

Name	Title	Phone	Email Address
Ellen Barton	President	609-634-7009	bartonep98@comcast.net
Jennifer Smith	Vice President	856-912-8462	esmith3012@comcast.net
Patti Fuhrmeister	Treasurer	609-221-2586	fuhrmeister@childrensong.org
Bridget Hammel	Secretary	973-462-0794	dean_hammel@comcast.net
Polly Murray	Artistic Director	856-816-8667	pmurray@childrensong.org
Angel Tofani	Member	609-870-7768	legna1211@yahoo.com
Sarah Sherr	Member	215-808-1221	sjwsherr@gmail.com
Susan Malec	Member	609-707-2228	susanmalec@gmail.com
Brian and Megan Herron	Members	215-510-1276	meganmcgeeherron@gmail.com
Annabelle Estacio-Touhey	Member	856-953-7727	ktouhey12@comcast.net